

Full Biography

“Jerry Nadler not only represents New York well, but he has represented the United States very well.”

— Former President Bill Clinton

Congressman Jerrold “Jerry” Nadler represents the Eighth Congressional District of New York. The Eighth, one of the nation’s most dynamic and diverse districts, includes Manhattan’s Upper West Side below 89th Street, the Theater District and Times Square, Chelsea, Greenwich Village, SoHo, Wall Street, and the Brooklyn neighborhoods of Borough Park, Coney Island, Brighton Beach and Bensonhurst.

Rep. Nadler began his political career in 1976 in the New York State Assembly, where he served for 16 years. In 1992, following the death of Congressman Ted Weiss, Nadler was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives in a special election and has served in Congress ever since. He was re-elected to his eighth full term in 2008, receiving 80 percent of the vote.

In 2007, with the Democrats in control of Congress, Rep. Nadler was given the honor of serving as the Chair of House Judiciary Subcommittee on the Constitution, Civil Rights and Civil Liberties. He is also the highest ranking Northeastern member of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, an Assistant Democrat Whip and, since November 2008, the New York State Congressional Delegation’s representative on the Democratic Steering and Policy Committee, affording him the opportunity to work on a daily basis to shape policy and the major laws that govern our country.

Throughout his career, Rep. Nadler has been a champion of civil liberties, civil rights (including women’s and LGBT rights), safe and efficient transportation, and a host of progressive issues such as access to health care, support for the arts and protection of the Social Security system. He is considered an unapologetic defender of those who might otherwise be forgotten by the economy or legal system and is especially respected for his creative and pragmatic legislative approaches to problems. From his leadership in response to the September 11th terrorist attacks on his district to his insight and policymaking prominence on issues facing Israel and the Middle East, Nadler has always sought to be steadfast and responsive in his service to New York and the nation.

Rep. Nadler’s district includes Ground Zero, the site where the Twin Towers once stood. Since the 9/11 attacks, he has been a leader in Congress on addressing the health and environmental impacts of the collapse of the World Trade Center on first responders and area residents, workers and students. He continues to demand that the Environmental Protection Agency conduct proper testing and clean up of the affected areas.

The Eighth Congressional District of New York is also home to many of the nation’s most recognizable landmarks, including the Statue of Liberty, the Empire State Building, South Street Seaport, Lincoln Center, Penn Station, Madison Square Garden, New York’s City Hall and the Coney Island Amusement District.

A well-regarded source of political opinion and policy expertise, Rep. Nadler has been a featured guest on nearly every significant public affairs and news program, including NBC’s Meet the Press, Larry King Live, the PBS NewsHour with Jim Lehrer and MSNBC’s Countdown with Keith Olbermann. Nadler is also a reliable commentator for major print news sources, both nationally and internationally, and is often quoted in outlets such as the Associated Press, the New York Times, the New York Post, the New York Daily News and the Washington Post.

Rep. Nadler is a graduate of Crown Heights Yeshiva, Stuyvesant High School, Columbia University and Fordham Law School. He lives on the Upper West Side of Manhattan with his wife, Joyce Miller. They have one son, Michael.

Promoting Liberty, Equality and Progressive Values

Congressman Nadler is perhaps best known as a senior member of the House Judiciary Committee. It was there that, as a third-term Representative in 1998, he rose to national prominence as a vigorous defender of the Constitution during President Clinton's impeachment hearings. Nadler's unwavering demand for bipartisan adherence to the Constitution earned him national praise.

As the Chair of the House Judiciary's Subcommittee on the Constitution, Civil Rights and Civil Liberties, Rep. Nadler has a major role in overseeing privacy issues, due process, civil rights, civil liberties, reproductive freedom, voting rights, LGBT rights, religious liberty and freedom of expression. This places him squarely at the heart of many of the major ideological debates of our day.

Upon assuming the Chair of the Subcommittee in 2007, Rep. Nadler launched a series of hearings titled "The Constitution in Crisis: The State of Civil Liberties in America." In these hearings, the Subcommittee investigated the Bush Administration's policies, actions and programs that threaten Americans' fundamental constitutional rights and civil liberties.

Rep. Nadler has long supported and fought for protections against unwarranted government interference in our personal affairs and the guarantee of due process under the law. Events of the recent past have made this struggle more timely and meaningful than ever. After 9/11, actions by the Bush Administration and its willing Republican Congress threatened those basic rights under the illusory banner of enhancing national security. Nadler's legislation to remove the most pernicious elements of the USA PATRIOT Act and his insistence on constitutionally appropriate treatment of those suspected of crimes have won him praise from organizations and individuals spanning the political and ideological spectrum.

In 2007, he introduced the Restoring the Constitution Act 2007 and the Restoring Habeas Corpus Act 2007, two bills designed to protect the fundamental rights and liberties guaranteed by the Constitution, rights and liberties that were ignored or circumvented by the Bush Administration and the Military Commissions Act. Nadler is also a member of both the Congressional Human Rights Caucus and the Congressional Progressive Caucus.

In the waning days of the Bush Administration, Rep. Nadler continued to be a prominent voice against White House abuse of power, investigating those with a hand in illegally spying, torturing or depriving individuals of due process. A passionate believer in accountability for executive abuses, Nadler has held numerous high-profile hearings and introduced several key bills designed to restore balance and the rule of law, including the State Secret Protection Act, the American Anti-Torture Act, the Midnight Rule Act, and a resolution against pre-emptive pardons by President Bush.

Rep. Nadler has also focused much of his career advancing the cause of civil rights. As a staunch supporter of equal rights and a House Vice-Chair of the LGBT Equality Caucus, he led the effort to oppose attempts at writing discrimination into the Constitution in the form of the so-called Federal Marriage Amendment. He has also authored landmark bills that would grant equal access to immigration and Social Security benefits to all Americans, regardless of sexual orientation. And he has successfully passed bills that have actually advanced LGBT rights and brought key funding to the community. Similarly, he has used his Subcommittee chairmanship to protect and advance the rights of members of communities of color through his leadership on the reauthorization of the Voting Rights Act and on the passage of a variety of bills aimed at redressing injustices dating back to the Jim Crow era.

Likewise, Rep. Nadler has been a House leader on women's rights issues. In particular, in the face of repeated back-door attempts to outlaw abortion, Nadler, a senior member of the Pro-Choice Caucus, has long led House efforts to

protect a woman's right to choose and is the lead sponsor of the Freedom of Choice Act, which would codify Roe v. Wade into federal law. His work led Kate Michaelman, former president of NARAL Pro-Choice America, to assert: "Jerry Nadler is at the forefront of the movement to protect reproductive freedom, fighting every day against anti-choice leaders in Congress and the White House."

Rep. Nadler's work on First Amendment freedoms is also widely recognized and respected. He is one of Congress's most vocal defenders of the separation of church and state and of Americans' right to exercise their religion freely. He was one of the lead Democratic sponsors of the Religious Freedom Restoration Act and the Democratic sponsor of the Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act, which was signed into law by President Clinton in 2000 and upheld by the Supreme Court. Nadler has also been a consistent champion of freedom of expression, fighting against countless efforts to restrict speech and quell dissent, notably being one of the most vocal opponents against the failed proposed Constitutional amendment to ban flag "desecration." As a leader of the Congressional Arts Caucus, he was one of the chief opponents of Republican efforts to destroy the National Endowment for the Arts.

These accomplishments, coupled with his leadership in the Congressional Progressive Caucus and an expansive portfolio of other progressive achievements -- from garnering hundreds of millions of dollars for the Section 8 affordable housing program, to shaping the national debate on Social Security by being the first to challenge the Republicans' "doom and gloom" solvency forecast, to the passing of his bill to close the digital divide in education -- led Vanity Fair magazine, in its Hall of Fame Tribute to Congressman Nadler, to remark that he epitomizes "liberalism the way it ought to be." Nadler's record has earned him ratings of 100 percent from such groups as the League of Conservation Voters, Planned Parenthood, the NAACP, the Human Rights Campaign, Children's Defense Fund, the American Civil Liberties Union and the American Federation of Teachers.

Leading on Transportation Issues

In addition to his involvement on the Judiciary Committee, Congressman Nadler is also a longstanding and nationally recognized expert on transportation and infrastructure issues. During his 16 years as a New York State Assemblyman, Nadler's ideas for improving transportation and infrastructure translated into practical legislative solutions. He also founded and chaired the New York State Assembly's Mass Transit and Rail Freight Subcommittee. Since his election to the U.S. House of Representatives, he has brought that expertise and enthusiasm on transportation issues to the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee. As the most senior Northeastern member of that Committee, the co-chair of the Congressional Transit Caucus and of the Fair Share Coalition, Nadler is a major advocate for increased funding of New York's mass transit systems, for improved roads and infrastructure, and for a generally more efficient policy guiding the movement of freight both locally and nationwide.

At the height of the 2008-2009 economic recession, Rep. Nadler fought hard to secure funding for transportation -- and particularly for mass transit -- that would improve and expand existing infrastructure, create jobs, advance sustainable and green public works projects, and further economic development around the country. His efforts for New York and beyond will continue to be instrumental in leveraging transportation funds for the Northeast when the country's major transportation bill is reauthorized in late-2009.

For many years, Rep. Nadler stood virtually alone in decrying downstate New York's isolation from the national rail freight system and its almost total reliance on truck-borne freight. Such dependence has created enormous costs to the area in terms of increased air pollution, asthma, traffic congestion and the general expense of doing business in the area. More alarming, the region's over-dependence on one single structure -- the George Washington Bridge -- for moving freight represents a significant national security vulnerability.

Rep. Nadler plans to solve these problems by reconnecting New York City to the nation's rail freight system through the construction of a rail freight tunnel under New York Harbor. The Cross Harbor Rail Freight Tunnel Project is

steadily gaining momentum as local, state and federal leaders, and transportation experts form the consensus that a rail freight tunnel is the best way to ease the truck-traffic burden to our region. This project will reduce air pollution, provide tremendous economic benefit and bolster security by creating redundancy in the region's goods-movement system, and it enjoys the support of numerous elected officials, as well as environmental, business and community organizations.

Additionally, Rep. Nadler is a major supporter of New York City's shipping industry, long pushing for an expanded container port for Brooklyn. In 2008, he won a decisive victory by overcoming the City and State's 5+ year efforts to dismantle the Red Hook Container Port and replace it with mixed-use development. This not only saved Brooklyn's only container terminal but preserved hundreds of well-paid port jobs and kept alive Brooklyn's maritime relevance. Brooklyn's increased role in the industry will produce numerous great benefits for the region: decreased truck traffic across the river from New Jersey, reduced delivery time and cost of goods, quality maritime jobs for the city and economic development for Brooklyn.

In related efforts, Rep. Nadler has been a prime advocate for securing our nation's ports. The first major piece of legislation the House adopted in 2007 was H.R. 1, the Implementing Recommendations of the 9/11 Commission Act of 2007. That law includes a provision authored by Nadler that requires the scanning of 100 percent of all cargo containers before they are loaded on ships bound for the United States, thereby closing a gaping hole in our nation's ability to block nuclear, chemical and biological weapons and their components from entering our country.

Serving a Diverse and Fast-Paced District

Although he is a legislator with nationwide impact, Congressman Nadler is first and foremost a representative for New Yorkers. As a longtime community activist and a New Yorker to the core, the health of his home district and city is always his main priority. From reclaiming Governor's Island for New York City to securing crucial federal funding for the High Line park project and adjusting federal income tax brackets to reflect the higher cost of living in New York, Nadler is able to use his expertise and position in Congress to improve life in the city.

Rep. Nadler's strategy for delivering resources to the district is two fold: get to know the needs and particulars of each community intimately, and then advocate tirelessly according to those needs at all levels of government. He has been able to provide critical funding for a wide variety of community projects and priorities. In Brooklyn, for example, he has been instrumental in shorefront restoration efforts, securing funding for Maimonides Medical Center and Coney Island Hospital and obtaining free cellular phones for the Shomrim, Borough Park's neighborhood anti-crime unit. In Manhattan, he has brought home considerable funding for the development of the Hudson River Park, Riverside Park, programs at major cultural institutions such as Lincoln Center, the Museum of Natural History and for New York's world-renowned institutions of higher learning.

Being an effective voice for the community isn't, however, just about moving projects forward. It also means vigorously opposing those initiatives that could harm the city. When New York City wanted to reopen the Southwest Brooklyn Incinerator, located at the edge of Gravesend Bay, Rep. Nadler took the lead in preventing an environmental and health crisis in Bensonhurst. Also, when Donald Trump tried to tear down part of the newly renovated West Side Highway to enhance the views of the Hudson River for a new luxury building project, Nadler organized the effort to stop him.

"I don't believe that New Yorkers work hard and pay taxes so they can line Mr. Trump's pockets," Rep. Nadler said of the plan, which would have cost taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars.

Rep. Nadler's paramount concerns are the needs of everyday New Yorkers. When residents of Coney Island's Haber House apartment complex complained of frequent crime against elderly tenants, he secured

money from Congress to install security cameras throughout the development. When commuters wanted to make foot traffic through Penn Station more efficient, he worked with station authorities to change the direction of key escalators. Throughout the district and city, Nadler has used his transportation expertise to solve local traffic and transit problems, working to relieve congestion, improve bus and ferry routes and to modernize access to the subway. Additionally, he has fought hard to preserve and protect affordable housing in New York City, especially focused on the Mitchell-Lama and Section 8 housing stock.

Rep. Nadler's constituent service staff works tirelessly to help constituents navigate the complex and daunting world of government services, streamlining access to healthcare, the IRS, Social Security Administration and Veterans Affairs. Immigration and citizenship issues are a particular priority, as the district includes one of the nation's largest communities of new immigrants—especially from the former Soviet Union.

And Rep. Nadler's robust community relations program has long played a key role in preserving affordable housing, stopping senseless overdevelopment, reducing crime and enhancing our children's educational opportunities. Additionally, the Congressman has brought billions of dollars to the district for its infrastructure, social welfare and cultural needs.

Promoting a Sound and Just Foreign Policy

Congressman Nadler has consistently pushed for a U.S. foreign policy that underscores basic humanitarian principles and promotes democracy without unnecessary force or military engagement. He is particularly involved in Middle Eastern affairs and was a sharp critic of the Bush Administration's policies there.

As a leading member of the Congressional Out of Iraq Caucus, Rep. Nadler has long voiced his unequivocal opposition to the war in Iraq, which has tragically and needlessly cost thousands of lives and billions of dollars. He has consistently advocated for an end to America's involvement in Iraq's sectarian civil war.

Rep. Nadler is also a tireless advocate of the State of Israel, which, he believes, needs to be safe, prosperous and peaceful. Likewise, Nadler supports the creation of a stable and secure Palestinian state. As such, Nadler has consistently stood behind Middle East peace efforts, knowing well that there will be no resolution to the conflict until both sides feel that their needs are being addressed.

He is also a founding member of the Israel Working Group, created with Rep. Steve Israel, to create a dialogue between members of the Knesset and Congress on matters important to both. And he has been an activist for his entire life on important Jewish issues, acting in roles of leadership and in concert with prominent organizations such as the Anti-Defamation League, B'nai Zion, the American Jewish Congress, American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) and the United States Holocaust Memorial Council.

Also, with a district that includes the country's largest community of immigrants from the former Soviet Union (FSU), Rep. Nadler has become a keen observer and advocate on a wide range of post-Soviet issues. In 2009, he obtained funding for Project Chernobyl, a New York-based public health initiative to provide thyroid cancer screenings for FSU immigrants who may have been exposed to radiation after the Chernobyl nuclear disaster of 1986. And, since 2006, Nadler has taken up the cause of FSU pensioners who have been denied their hard-earned pensions by the former Soviet governments because they are now residents of the United States.

Addressing the Health and Environmental Impact of 9/11

After the devastating terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, Congressman Nadler led the fight in Congress and at the White House to secure \$20 billion for recovery work and he has consistently spoken up for New York each time the rebuilding effort required help from the federal government. Immediately following the attacks, he convened the Ground Zero Elected Officials Task Force to coordinate delivery of much-needed aid and supplies to the residents and businesses of lower Manhattan. His work to help New Yorkers repair their communities and lives has earned him widespread praise, including the honor of recipient of the 2003 Legislator of the Year Award from the International Association of Firefighters.

When the initial shock of the tragedy had subsided, Rep. Nadler worked tirelessly to ensure that victims received the government attention and assistance they needed. He introduced legislation to expedite the payment of benefits to the families of public safety officers killed on 9/11, pushed to extend unemployment benefits for those who lost their jobs as a result of the attacks and worked closely with constituents and government officials to ensure that aid from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) was properly delivered to all of those needing it. Nadler secured \$500 million in Community Development Block Grant funding for residents and small businesses recovering from the effects of the attacks and he authored the September 11th Aid Preservation Act of 2002 and the September 11th Tax Correction Act to ensure that aid was granted, dispensed and taxed appropriately.

Rep. Nadler has also taken the lead in the continuing fight for first responders and other victims of 9/11 whose health has been affected by the attacks. Along with several colleagues, he authored the 9/11 Comprehensive Health Benefits Act and the 9/11 Health and Compensation Act, legislation which will create an overarching program to monitor and treat all of the first responders and community members who have become sick due to their exposure to post-9/11 toxins in and around Ground Zero, and provide compensation for their economic losses.

Rep. Nadler is also deeply involved in protecting air quality in lower Manhattan. Soon after the attacks, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) carelessly declared the area safe for the return of residents to their homes and denied its responsibility for conducting air quality tests and cleanup efforts in affected buildings. Nadler immediately called public attention to the EPA's negligence, which gravely threatened the health of local residents and workers. He subsequently chaired hearings to investigate this negligence and determine the actual extent of environmental hazards in the area.

In June of 2007, Rep. Nadler and Senator Hillary Clinton held companion hearings on the federal government's actions in responding to the environmental effects of the World Trade Center attacks. These hearings were the first-ever comprehensive Congressional hearings on these matters. Former EPA head Christine Todd Whitman testified for the first time before Congress about her role in providing what the EPA Inspector General called "falsely reassuring" statements on air quality and on the lack of proper testing and decontamination of indoor spaces.

As EPA officials continue to commit and cover-up mistakes and deny responsibility, Rep. Nadler continues to fight on behalf of constituents for higher standards and a more comprehensive cleanup process.

"Of all the politicians in this town, Nadler has fought the hardest to get EPA to assume responsibility for indoor cleanup," wrote Juan Gonzalez of the New York Daily News.

A Long and Distinguished Record in Politics and Government

Congressman Nadler first got into public service in the late 1960s as a student at Columbia University, where he founded a group of students known as the West Side Kids. The Kids focused on reforming New York City Democratic politics through support of liberal and anti-Vietnam War candidates and community organizing to improve local housing and

educational conditions.

In 1976, after a period as a legislative staffer, Nadler won a seat in the New York State Assembly, where he developed a strong record on such issues as civil liberties, environmental protection and campaign finance reform. He is credited with authoring much of New York State's body of law on domestic violence and child support enforcement and was one of the architects of the landmark Child Support Standards Act.

Over the next 16 years, Nadler developed an impressive resume as a legislator and, according to the 1992 New York Red Book, "compil[ed] a record of fiscal foresight and prudence." Nadler also earned hundreds of awards from various organizations for his Assembly work, from being the only male to be honored as Assemblymember of the Year by the National Organization for Women (NOW) to his inclusion on the American Civil Liberties Union's (ACLU) Annual Honor Roll.

Now, having served in Congress since 1992, Rep. Nadler has truly become an accomplished and experienced legislator, a stalwart supporter of the principles of freedom and equality, and he is well respected by his colleagues on both sides of the aisle. On both the national and local level, Nadler brings passion and knowledge to his work.